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ABSTRACT

The many ways in which children use language are examined in this paper, and classroom implications are outlined. The first part of the paper discusses such topics as young children's focus on meaning in language, teachers' tendency to examine language in terms of form rather than meaning, and the importance of the student/teacher interaction process. It identifies the seven language functions described by M. A. K. Halliday--instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, imaginative, heuristic, and informative--and tells how children develop ideas about the ways language should be used in the classroom. The paper then presents transcripts of conversations of first grade children engaged in such classroom activities as looking at a book, play-acting, and building with blocks. It discusses the children's languge in relation to Halliday's categories and concludes that teachers' awareness, listening skills, and interactions with children make the critical difference in the development of a child's full range of language functions. Finally, transcripts of kindergarten children's retellings of stories are presented as evidence of young children's awareness of book language. The paper concludes by advising teachers to provide situations in which children focus on meaning and use language for their own purposes. (GT)

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FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE IN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

Paper Presented at the Annual Conference
on Language and Reading

Gay Su Pinnell

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FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE IN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

Children learn early that language serves their needs. As they interact with those around them, they constantly try to convey meaning to others. They learn to talk differently in different situations and when talking to different people. They use language, discovering the underlying rules and patterns of language and then testing those discoveries through further use. For example, two-year-old Jennifer looks at the canned peaches she is eating and speaks thoughtfully to her mother:

Jenny: Fruit at market?
Mother: Yes, we got the fruit at the market.
Jenny: More fruit at market?
Mother: Yes, they have more fruit at the market. We can get some next time we go. Would you like that?
Jenny: Beans at market?
Mother: Yes, they have beans at the market too. Would you like some beans?
Jenny: Mmhm. Fruit, fruit, fruit.

Jenny's language reflects several uses. She is verifying her ideas, and she is testing her ability to ask questions and get information. Her mother's answer interprets and responds to the child's meaning as well as expanding Jenny's question into the adult grammatical form. Jenny is not only learning about food; she is learning about language through interacting, practicing, and testing what she knows.

One day last summer, Jenny provided an example of creative use of language. She tried to pick up a bucket full of sand that had been left in the yard. Feeling frustrated, she started to cry. "That's too heavy, Jenny, "said her mother." Later in the year, when Jenny tried to wipe off the table after lunch, she had a great deal of trouble removing something sticky.

Scowling, she threw down the rag, saying, "Heavy, heavy!" For several months Jenny continued to use the work "heavy" to mean "difficult." To Jenny, the word "heavy" meant something too hard for her to do. She used the word to convey that meaning in other situations.

As they talk and listen in a variety of social situations in their homes and neighborhoods, children build up notions of the purposes language can serve. They focus on how language can be used to satisfy needs and desires, to control elements of their world, and to express personality and imagination. Always, they focus on meaning. A good example of concentration on meaning comes from David, age four. David and his father were looking out the bedroom window. They saw a toy tractor which had rolled down a small hill at the back of the house. His father pointed out the tractor to David and the following conversation ensued.

David: Steve (his brother) throwed it down the hill.
Father: You mean Steve threw it down the hill.
David: Steve throwed it down the hill.
Father: No, Steve threw it down the hill.
David: Steve throwed it down the hill.
Father: Say, Steve threw it down the hill.
David: Steve threw it down the hill.
Father: Do you know what we've been studying, David? We've been studying grammar.
David: You've been studying grammar. I've been studying tractors.

Young children learning language focus on meaning and on the uses language serves in their lives. When they enter school, however, they often find the adults in their school world focusing on different aspects of language. Language is frequently examined and evaluated in terms of form rather than purposeful uses. Instruction tends to center on the way children speak and seeks to improve grammatical structure rather than to provide situations

that require a variety of language uses. Language is subjected to intense scrutiny, and anxiety often accompanies designs to teach the "right" forms.

Concern for helping children become effective users of language is evident in the abundance of federal and state money invested in language development programs; in the creation of specialist positions, such as "language development" or "language enrichment" teachers; and in legislative-mandated minimal competency standards for language skills. In general, however, forward thrusts have maintained the status quo as far as the approach to language development is concerned. Instruction continues to attempt a direct attack on language performance. Children engage in drill and practice the "correct" forms of language, but little attention is given to the development of a variety of language functions.

If we are to help our students become effective users of language, we need to provide opportunities for the development not only of "correctness" but of flexibility, fluency, and growth in the ability to communicate meaning. In fact, it is through using language for a variety of purposes as they interact with peers and with informed and skillful teachers that children can truly learn the various forms of language.

Discussions of teaching and learning are usually concerned with the content that is to be learned, methods, materials, or ability of students rather than how the relationship between teacher and student can best enable learning and teaching to take place. The interaction involved in the process is usually ignored, Doughty (1972) suggests that a child's

ability to use language for learning is dependent on the range and quality of language experienced in day-to-day life. How can we as teachers make the everyday interactions in the classroom a curriculum which provides opportunity for the development of effective language use? We can begin by listening carefully to children and thinking about how language and language functions are learned.

M.A.K. Halliday (1973), 1974, 1975) described language development as a process whereby the child gradually "learns how to mean." Halliday identified functions of language universally used by people to communicate meaning to others and labeled language functions in seven categories:

1. Instrumental language— "I want," or "I need." Language is used to satisfy needs or desires. Very often it takes the form of a request.

2. Regulatory language— "Do this," or "Stop it!" Language is used to control the behavior of other people.

3. Interactional language— "Let's play," or "You and me." The speaker uses language to establish and define social relationships and to participate in the "give and take" of social intercourse. Of course, categories overlap. For example, I remember my four-year-old neice saying, "I'll give you a nickel if you'll tickle me." She was not only requesting; she was negotiating.

4. Personal language— "Here I am!" Language is used to express one's individuality or to give personal opinions and feelings.

5. Imaginative language— "Let's pretend." The speaker uses language to express fantasies or to create an imaginary world.

6. Heuristic language— "I wonder why?" The speaker uses language to find out about things, to ask questions, to seek information.

7. Informative language— "I've got something to tell you." Language is used by a speaker to give information about the world he or she has experienced.

From language experienced in the environment, children internalize ideas about what they need to do with language and how it can be used. Halliday's (1973, 1974, 1975) studies of functions of language indicate that it is important for children to hear many kinds of talking and to try out the whole range of language functions. Children whose language environments (at home or at school) do not include some functions or who are discouraged from a particular use of language are unlikely to develop to their full potential the ability to use or comprehend those functions.

In a discussion of the classroom as a social context for language learning, Peter Doughty (1972) attempted to relate development of language functions to the individual's experiences in home and school life. Children act upon what they <u>believe</u> they can do with language and these beliefs are built as they interact with other people in the environment.

They bring to the school their knowledge of the ways language can be used. They have learned what they can do with language and the possible meanings they can express. In addition, they have become aware of language as an expression of social roles and have ideas about the acceptability and appropriateness of language functions in a variety of interactional situations. When they enter the new environment of the school, they learn what uses of language are possible and appropriate. Within the social context of the classroom, children develop ideas about <u>how</u> language can and should be used for learning at school. They do not simply mimic or imitate the adults in the environment; they participate. They try out ways of talking and receive immediate feedback from peers and teachers.

Maintaining and expanding the full range of language functions is closely related to the opportunities provided in the school context. Use of language can be stifled as well as facilitated by the experiences provided. For example, in educational environments, information giving ("the answer") is often emphasized and valued, while other uses of language, such as heuristic or imaginative, are unintentionally discouraged or are not given emphasis and value during daily interactions in the classroom. Yet it is through stretching the language to describe hypothetical situations or through wondering and putting speculations and guesses into words that children develop the uses of language which are critical to their later problem-solving, decision-making, and leadership.

When children are required to use language to grapple with new experiences or to organize previous experiences in a new way, they modify, extend, and enrich their language. New language structures and functions arise as a response to an experience which creates a need. To provide for fullest development, the school must make use of the way human beings develop command of a language. An essential feature of school life is a wide range of learning situations which require different ways of speaking and writing.

I'm going to play some recordings of the language of first-grade children as they talk with peers in a classroom setting. The language you will hear was recorded during an investigation of children's language as it occurs naturally within the classroom. The study attempted to identify and describe the language produced in regard to:

- the functions or purposes for which young children use language in the classroom; and
- characteristics of situations which may be linked to the variety of functions used.

The tapes were recorded during normal, on-going work in informal situations. In the classrooms, children used a wide variety of materials and made many of their own decisions concerning their activities. They were permitted to move about the room and to talk freely with each other and their teachers as they worked. Children were recorded for 30 minutes at a time and their behavior was simultaneously observed.

To make sure the language was natural, an unobtrusive way of recording language in school classrooms was devised. Small transistor tape recorders were concealed in denim aprons worn by subjects as they carried on with their usual activities. There was no attempt to manipulate the classroom situation. Observed behavior indicated that subjects quickly forgot that they were being recorded. Each protocol, then, was a detailed reconstruction of the events during each thirty-minute period, including: the spoken language of each subject; comments by persons who interacted with each subject; the observed behavior of each subject; and the setting in which language was used. The protocols revealed some interesting information for teachers who want to foster a range of language functions in their classrooms. The following example is from the conversation of two six-year-old boys as they looked together at a book.

Rod and Sean, two six-year-old boys, are looking at a book with pictures of Pinnochio in it.

Sean--How did they make Pinnochio?
Rod--Know who made him?
Sean--Who?
Rod--I show you.
Sean--He made 'im?
Rod--Right. He, he, he's a toy maker. He made Pinnochio. Now he made out of real.
Sean--Yeah, but, how can he talk when he made up? It's like Steve Austin?
Rod--Yeah.
Sean--Oh yeah, I know now. He's half real and he's half . . .
Rod--wood. He's half real and half wood.
Sean--I don't see how he can make Pinnocchio.
Rod--Well he did. Take some wood, cut a circle round wood, circle . . .
Sean--Make some hands and make some arms?
Rod--Yeah, and then, and make everything on him and then if . . .
Sean--(breaking in) so . . .
Rod--(louder voice-refuses to be interrupted) and then you cut and then you saws it out, then you put the nails under, and he make, then he gon' made out a real live, real wood.
Sean--Uh, you make the, you put the nail, you take the, you take the, you take uh . . .
Rod--You take the nails, you, you, you put nails in it then, and then when you twist his head, his head go twist.
Sean--He twist his head when gets finished with it. He be, he be yours.
Rod--Well, he be ugly.

In the conversation you just heard, Rod and Sean were expressing confusion about two seemingly conflicting ideas--real and wood. They were asking questions and synthesizing information derived from their own experiences; they were hypothesing or speculating about the answers to those questions. Information from books, from television, and from experiences in working with wood are evident in their talk. They were giving information, asking questions, describing, using language to make significant meanings explicit to each other.

Another example was recorded in the house corner. Three six-year-old girls, Andrea, Julie, and Audrey had been acting out a drama about two girls and a "mean man." What you will hear is the end of their play, which lasted more than

half an hour. It was obvious from the beginning of the drama that the girls had played this game many times before, not only in their present classroom, but last year in kindergarten.

Three six-year-old girls, Andrea, Julie, and Audrey, are playing in the house corner. They have been acting out a drama about two girls and a "mean man." Prior conversation revealed that they had played the game many times.

Andrea--No, no, no. (Giggles and screams.)
Julie--I will kill you now. Act like you let me.
Julie--I will kill you! I will cut you. I will cut you. I will kill you. I killed you! (Julie pretends to kill Audrey.)
Audrey--(Goes out of the play corner and comes in again). I went up to heaven. I came down again already. Then I was magic now. I was magic now.
Andrea--I'm magic too then.
Audrey--Uh, huh.
Andrea--I'm magic. I'm magic now.
Audrey--Here I'll get you a dress. OK, sister?
Andrea--I think I'd like the beautifullest dress in the world.
Audrey--No, you can get something right here. Act like you made a boo-boo and that was invisible. You gotta get somethin' on! (Pretending)
Andrea--No, Audrey. I didn't.
Audrey--Act like we got the same dress. OK? And we got the same thing on so he doesn't know which is which. Come on, sister. (Audrey and Andrea move over to Julie.)
(Julie starts trying to scare the other two.)
Andrea--I turned you into a toad.
Audrey--No ah, you change him into a good man.
Andrea--You're all good now. Instead of bad.
Audrey--Let's go to a party, OK?
Andrea--No. Cause I'm gonna stay home in case he tries to tear up the house.
Audrey--No, we put a spell on him.
Andrea--No we didn't.
Audrey--This is a angel dress. We both got the same dress on. (Turns to Julie.) She's got the same dress. This is a angel dress.
Andrea--And come down to earth and we ain't no angel and no just spirit. We're a person again.
Audrey--Yeah, but we're magic like Bewitched.

Andrea, Julie, and Audrey were using language to create a fantasy world and perhaps to play out their fears. They easily switched from interactive language (planning and coming to agreement concerning the nature of the play) to imaginative language (playing a role). As in the first recording of Rod and Sean, the influence of books and television is evident. For example a statement of

Audrey's ("Act like you made a booboo and that was invisible") probably referred to the story "The Emperor's New Clothes." Changing someone into a toad indicates some knowledge of fairy tales. Changing someone mean into a "good man" is an interesting adaptation. The focus on murder and the "Bewitched" theme refer to television. The influence of religion might also be inferred.

The next recording is of two boys, six-year-old Robbie and seven-year-old J.J., as they work at the water table. They have been using a set of small plastic bricks to build boats and a dock, and they now meet a problem.

Six-year-old Robbie and seven-year-old J.J. are playing at the water table. They are using a set of small plastic bricks to build boats and a dock.

Robbie--Yeah. I didn't get me a boat built, man.
J.J.--This is mine and yours boat. Unless you wanta make another one.
Robbie--This thing don't float that good.
Robbie--Looks like the water boat.
J.J.--I think we need more weight on this side.
Robbie--I mean how, how to . . . Look at this, man.
J.J.--I think we need some more weight.
Robbie--Man, this thing's sinkin I even made this circle float man.
J.J.--I'll have to put the rooster on.
Robbie--I got flippers on this thing.
J.J.--Does it work?
Robbie--No, it's not workin' too well.
J.J.--Well, try it back here.
Robbie--Hey, wait a minute. I'm gonna balance this thing.
J.J.--Our house is gonna be drownded! In the middle of the ocean! Help! We're drownding!
I know what's the matter. We got too much weight on the back. That's what I think. We got too much weight on the back.
Robbie--Uh, oh. You know something?
J.J.--What?
Robbie--It's partly because of this chimney and these man.
J.J.--We got too much weight on the back. I need something for weight on the front.

Robbie--I'm puttin real much weight on front and back. See? Gotta lotta weight on front and back. Here's where the dock's gonna be--if I can get this to stay up. I think I know how, I think I know how this can stay up, man.
J.J. I hope you know. That's what we need, something that can stay up.
Robbie--Well, this piece of dock could stay up man. Well, here, that . . .
J.J.--This could be a underwater sub.
Robbie--Yeah, subs go underwater.
Robbie--Remember, J.J., we're sharin' that thing.
J.J.--Hah?
Robbie--Remember we're sharin' that thing.
J.J.--I know.

The boys were learning about properties of water and flotation. What were they learning about language? J.J. and Robbie were investigating, wondering, trying to find out about something important to them. They were using information they had learned through post experiences and were restating it to each other. They had guessed that floating has something to do with weight and balance. They hypothesized to each other, making intentions explicit. They gave orders and stated relationships. As they concentrated on the problem, they used informative, heuristic, and imaginative language in a conversation that flowed naturally.

Analysis of some thirty-six hours of recorded talk revealed trends which might be interesting to teachers concerned with the development of a wide range of language functions. As subjects moved about, carrying on their normal classroom activities, they engaged almost constantly in purposeful talk. I would like to examine that talk in relation to Halliday's categories.

Instrumental Language

A relatively low amount (7 percent) of instrumental language was recorded, probably because subjects had opportunities to do a great deal of talking, using language in a variety of ways. They were not expected to remain quiet unless they needed something or had to ask the teacher's permission for some action. Subjects displayed a high degree of independence; they know where to obtain materials and supplies and knew general rules and procedures. So, instrumental use of language was minimized.

Regulatory Language

Language in the regulatory category included expressing or defending rights, proclaiming territory, and giving orders. Regulatory language was more

frequently used than instrumental. About 13 percent of the language could be classified as regulatory.

In competitive game situations, such as checkers or marbles, children tended to use a very high proportion of regulatory language. They told each other how to move, gave orders, and stopped wrong or unfair behavior. Regulatory language was occasionally accompanied by justification in terms of rules or standard procedures. Regulatory language was also freguently used when children were trying to play together, sharing materials and toys. Such situations appeared to provide opportunities for the practice of more socialized forms for regulating others, essential for the development of leadership skills. With teachers, children used little or no regulatory language. They used more instrumental language with teachers than with peers. (About 1/3 of their interactions with teachers were instrumental). Possibly, children rely on instrumental language to get what they want from teachers, perceiving that requesting is the proper and accepted form to be used with adults; while with other children, requesting, demanding, and ordering are equally effective.

Interactional Language

About half the language recorded could be categorized as primarily interactional. Children were observed to be at ease in the informal setting. In all classrooms, attention was paid to creating a social climate in which respect for others was emphasized and valued. Children were encouraged to build social relationships with others, to help each other, and to work together. They offered suggestions to each other, worked out ways to share materials, sought and gave support to each other, established and confirmed friendship, and invited others to enter into cooperative activities. Opportunities for using interactional functions of

language were inherent in classroom activities which demanded cooperation. The segment of conversation between the boys at the water table illustrates such cooperation "Remember, J.J.," says Robbie, "we're sharing that thing."

Interactions with teachers were constrained by the number of students competing for attention and by the teachers' rapid movement around the room as they carried out managerial tasks. In spite of constraints, the largest proportion of language addressed to teachers was interactional. Children came to their teachers for help, support, friendship, and encouragement.

Imaginative Language

Language with an imaginative quality occurred most frequently and in longest sequences in situations such as the house corner or "dress-up" area where materials and props stimulated children to create imaginary situations. Children's play in the house corner reflected themes familiar to home life and to television shows. As they played in the house corner, subjects tended to switch to interactive language during the course of a dramatic sequence. They were able to stop dramatic play to make plans, give suggestions and direct the course of events, then move smoothly back into the world of imagination.

Sometimes teacher intervention stimulated language with an imaginative quality. For example, in the following instance, a teacher talked to Wendy about her painting:

> Teacher—Tell me about your picture.
>
> Wendy—See, it's a psychodelic . . . it's a psychodelic house with a girl dancing in it. A psychodelic house and a girl dancing in it.

Teacher—Is she alone in the house?

Wendy—No, I'm gonna make some more people.

Teacher—Oh, I see. Then you have a party!

The teacher encouraged Wendy to describe the scene and the people she had imagined as she painted some psychodelic pink rain. Wendy was learning to describe, to tell a story, to select words which precisely expressed her meaning. In cases like these, teachers are able to link into the child's imaginative world and to make it part of the language of the classroom. Unfortunately, very little imaginative language was used in conversations with teachers.

Personal Language

Proportion of language in the personal category was low in peer interactions and almost nonexistent in teacher/child interactions. The low proportion of personal language in teacher/child interactions may be linked to two factors. The first is related to perceptions of the teaching role. If teachers see their primary role as managing the classroom and imparting skills to pupils, they are likely to communicate high value for work-related talk but lower value for personal talk. Children may sense the emphasis and perceive that certain kinds of language are more appropriate than others for the school setting, particularly when talking with the teacher. In personal interviews conducted at the end of the year children stated that they talked to other children about a variety of subjects but to their teachers only about work.

The second factor is lack of time. Teachers were extremely busy managing the routine of the classroom, meeting the immediate demands of children for materials and supplies, suggesting work projects to students, making assignments and checking to be sure they were carried out, and trying to contact as many

children as possible. Within the time constraints created by managerial demands, little time was utilized for personal conversations or for spontaneous talk. Teachers appeared to believe that they were expected to use every minute in questioning, encouraging children to make information explicit, or directing and suggesting work.

Informative Language

A fairly high proportion (about 15 percent) of the recorded language could be categorized as informative. Children represented their experiences to each other. They informed others about the objects, living things, and events of the world they knew. Most informative language recorded was at a factual or identification level. Subjects named items for each other and described them. Occasionally, when situations demanded, they described sequences of events, made comparisons, or stated relationships.

In very few instances during recording periods did children synthesize information, draw conclusions, or state inferences. Skillful teacher intervention can help children to focus on the major ideas, to gather their thoughts and the information they have derived from past experiences, and to bring it to bear on the present circumstances. The teacher's task is twofold: to provide learning situtations where a variety of levels of informative language can be used and to communicate high value for interpreting and speculating.

Informative language arises when children see the need for explicating ideas acquired through their own experiences. Situations which require explaining, describing, and drawing conclusions using the child's own logic are those which help to develop skill in using informative language. If children know they are expected to draw their own conclusions, to explain things to each other, and to try to figure out things for themselves, they are less likely to look to the teacher for "right" answers.

Heuristic Language

The teacher plays a critical role in the development of heuristic language. In spite of opportunities for investigation which were inherent in the rich display of classroom materials, very little of the recorded language could be classified as heuristic.

In situations where heuristic language was evident, two elements were present: a problem was available for investigation and two or more people were working together to investigate it. It is probable that curious six-year-olds engage in a great deal of investigative behavior, but they might find it difficult to express the process in words. Working and interacting with others, both peers and adults, in a school classroom provides a rich context for the development of heuristic language.

To stimulate investigative language, teachers can provide situations which present real problems for children to solve; can encourage them to talk together as they work; and can "wonder" with them, creating a setting where all persons are hypothesizing, testing, and generating further questions.

Implications

The language study indicates that even in the best of educational situations, encouragement for talking and self expression do not guarantee the development of a child's full range of language functions. Teachers, their awareness, their listening skills, their careful structuring of problem situations, and the subtle communications through which they invite children to talk for a variety of reasons make the critical difference.

The study of functions of language has implications for the development of reading abilities. Marie Clay's (1972) research with New Zealand preschoolers

indicates that children's growing awareness of language functions includes becoming aware that "our use of the language when we speak differs from our use in written form." All children, whatever dialect they speak, must become aware of the differences between spoken language and what Clay calls "book language." Clay describes the transition to "talking like a book" as an important step in early reading behavior.

Through everyday interactions in the classroom, the recorded examples presented earlier illustrated children's awareness of the language and themes of stories. The next examples focus on children's direct responses to books and their awareness of "book language." You are going to hear some tapes of children retelling stories. In each case, a story was read to a kindergarten child. Then the child was asked to "read" the story as he or she looked at the pictures. The books used were Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak and In the Rabbitgarden by Leo Lionni.

The first retelling is by Brian, age 5. Brian is seeing the book for the first time.

(See the following transcript of Brian's retelling of Where the Wild Things Are)

Brian started by describing what he saw in the pictures on the first few pages. Looking carefully at each picture, he talked almost as if to himself. As he moved along in the book, he became more animated. He referred to specific events, such as sailing and the yellow eyes of the monsters. He focused on Max's statement "Stand Still!" and repeated it dramatically. At one point he switched to a more personal theme (remember the personal function of language) and brought in information about his own environment. At the

end of the story, he keyed in on the actual words used by the author: "his dinner was waiting for him and it was still hot."

The next retelling is by Jenny, also age 5. (Incidentally, this is the same Jenny who gave us the earlier examples). As you listen, keep in mind that the story is a favorite of Jenny's, one she has heard many times.

(See transcript on the following page of Jenny's retelling of Where the Wild Things Are)

Jenny also began by describing events in the pictures. She displayed a sense of story, drama, and audience. In several instances, she remembered the actual language of the story ("and in and out of weeks and over, over a year to where the wild things are"). Frequently, she transposed the general language of the story to apply the meaning in other ways. For example, she said, "stomped their terrible feet" and "crunch my terrible teeth" when "terrible feet" and "terrible teeth" were not part of the story. She also said, "and sailed back over a year without of weeks and throughout the day," remembering and paying attention to the sounds of the language. Like Brian, she ended the story exactly as the author did: "It was still hot."

Now listen to Jenny as she retells a longer, more sophisticated story from a book she is seeing for the first time. The book is In the Rabbitgarden.

(See transcript on the following page of Jenny's retelling of In the Rabbitgarden)

She started with "once upon a time," displaying her notions of how stories generally begin, and spent some time describing the pictures. She also used dialogue; for example, "The snake said, 'Well, if you are hungry,

SUMMARY OF TEXT

Sendak, Maurice. WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE, Harper & Row, 1969.

Where the Wild Things Are is the story of a mischievous little boy named Max whose mother sent him to bed without supper. In the angry Max's imagination, a forest grew in his room. He stepped into a small boat and

> . . .sailed off through night and day and in and out of weeks and almost over a year to where the wild things are.

Max reached the land of the wild things, who

> . . .roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws til Max said, "BE STILL!"

Max tamed the wild things by staring into their big yellow eyes without blinking once. He was made king of the land and immediately proclaimed a "wild rumpus." The wild things jumped up and down, hung from trees, and gave Max rides on their backs. Then Max stopped the rumpus and sent the wild things to bed without their supper. Suddenly he felt lonely

> . . .and wanted to be where someone loved him best of all.

Smelling good things to eat, he gave up being king. Although the wild things begged him not to go, and they roared and gnashed their teeth and showed their claws, Max sailed back

> . . .over a year and in and out of weeks and through a day and into the night of his own room where he found his supper waiting for him and it was still hot.

RETELLING

Brian, Age 5

He's hanging a nail in the wall, something. And tried to capture a dog. And then the dog run away and went back in his room. And he didn't get to eat supper, cause he got to go to bed. And he didn't want to run outside.

And then was outside and saw up, up, and then got in his sailboat and sailed along. Before he could pass a wild monster. No. And then there's the other ones. A big fat chicken. There it is.

Stand still! Or, that make all the others, yellow eyes, yellow eyes, yellow eyes, and again and again. He thinks he get (inaudible) things he saw and made him a king.

Then they jumped up in the night. Get down, get down, get down, get down. And all was hanging up on the tree like a swing.

A swing! I have a playground at home and it's got a swimming pool, too.

And then he looked like he's on a elephant, but no. And a chicken and all those wild monsters. Then went on to sleep. But, they didn't get to have no supper, so they just going to stay that big. Then, he went away and they want him to come back. But he still won't and waved and waved his hand. And he just went off.

And so he went back to his room and there his dinner was waiting for him and it was still hot.

Jenny, Age 5

Where the Wild Things Are. Once upon a time there was a little boy named Max. He was hanging on a rope, tied. His room was a mess. Max made a picture. It was a picture of a monster. It says by Max, and there was steps and there was a dog.

His mother called him wild thing even though. . . But, the moon was out. His windows were open. He had his door closed. He looks angry.

And then there were trees in his bedroom, and then there was lots and lots of trees and vines too. And now there were so many vines he couldn't believe it.

And then Max said, "Well, I think I'll take my boat." The wild thing said . . and in out of weeks and over, over a year to where the wild things are. And then Max said to the wild things, "I hate you."

They roared their terrible roars. They stomped their terrible feet. They blinked their eyes at them eighty times. And the wild things cry back, "Let a rumble start."

It looks like that they are going up in the air. One's climbing in the tree. Max is too. They're all being nice. And then he said, "Well, I think I'll crunch my terrible teeth. I'm gonna eat you up."

And sailed back over a year without of weeks and throughout the day. Into the night of his very own room where he found his supper waiting for him and he was happy and it was still hot.

why don't you take one of the goodest, juiciest apples?'" Compared to the previous retelling, fewer segments of language were identical to the text; however, many examples can be found to indicate awareness of written language. Some are:

"the big red fox"
"they ran for their whole life"
"They thought it was a dragon, he cried!"

The next retelling is by Mark, just turned 6, who is also seeing the book for the first time. While not so dramatic as Jenny's retelling, Mark's story contains much evidence of awareness of book language.

(See transcript on the following page of Mark's retelling of In the Rabbitgarden).

Mark also began by describing the pictures. He recalled many details from the story. His language was closely tied to the context and was accompanied by his pointing to the pictures. Some examples of awareness of book language are:

Use of the word "serpent."
"smiling serpent"
"He thought about what he heard."
"the ripest apple"
"eating skin and everything else"

Conclusion

Underlying spoken and written language are function and meaning. As teachers, we want to help children comprehend and convey meaning and to use language, both spoken and written, for a variety of purposes. The key to accomplishing these goals is to create situations and provide stimulation for a variety of language uses. The focus, then, is not on form, but on function. Such a focus does not imply neglecting the forms of language. In fact, the opposite is true. It does require developing knowledge of form within a meaningful context in situations where children focus on the meaning and use language for their own purposes. Helping children develop effective language uses

SUMMARY OF TEXT

Lionni, Leo. IN THE RABBITGARDEN, Pantheon, 1975.

In the Rabbitgarden is the story of two little rabbits who are left to fend for themselves when the old rabbit goes away. Before beginning his trip, the old rabbit said,

> "Behave well, and remember--eat all the carrots you want, but don't touch the apples or the fox will get you."

The two little rabbits played and ate carrots until one day they could find no more carrots. They looked and suddenly saw what they thought was the tip of a carrot. Instead, it was the tail of a large serpent, who said,

> "Were you going to eat the tip of my tail?. . .Do little rabbits eat serpents nowadays?"

The bunnies explained that they were hungry, and the serpent invited them to eat some apples from the tree. Since the rabbits couldn't reach the apples, the serpent gave them

> . . .the reddest, most fragrant apple they had ever seen or smelled.

The serpent and the rabbits became friends. They played games and the serpent showed them tricks, bounced them in the air and picked apples for them. But, one morning, when the two rabbits woke up,

> . . .there, peering out at them, half-hidden in the weeds, was a big red fox.

At first, they were frozen with fear, but then

> . . .they leaped for their lives.

Just when the fox was about to catch them, they saw the serpent and jumped into his mouth. The rabbits' ears and legs made strange-looking bulges within the serpent's body and appeared to be such a fearful animal that the fox ran away.

> "A dragon!" he cried.

When the old rabbit returned, he found two little rabbits eating apples with a "smiling serpent." He was surprised but not angry when he heard about the serpent's scaring away the fox. Then the serpent gave the old rabbit the juiciest apple and he ate it "skin and all."

RETELLING

Jenny, Age 5

In the Rabbitgarden. Once upon a time, there was a rabbit. He liked carrots very much. The other one was in the back of him. There were two rabbits together and one big one. One had black eyes with a brown circle. One had brown eyes with a brown circle. And one had brown eyes with a pink circle. Then the orange one with the black circle, the black one with the black circle went off to look for carrots.

Good, they found the carrot. They didn't think it was a carrot. They thought it was a carrot but it was a snake.

The snake said . . . The snake peeped out. Then they said, "Well, if you are hungry why don't you take one of the goodest, juiciest apples?"

"Well," said the snake, "here you go."

"Where's mine?"

So the snake gave him one. And then the rabbits were happy. But, then they were playing games.

Then the big red fox came. And he was starting to get 'em. They ran for their whole life. The fox was running after them. And then the rabbits went into the snake's mouth and they didn't get catched. Then they never seed a serpent ever before. They thought it was a dragon, he cried! So he ran away as fast as he could! Then they came out. Then they ate the apples again. The end.

Mark, Age 6 (just)

He's looking for a carrot and he can't find a carrot but he found a carrot. He said he's gonna go away but he don't want them go near the apple tree or the fox will get 'em.

And they were very (inaudible) they couldn't find a carrot. And he thought that was the tip of a carrot hanging from a tree but it was a serpent. And then he said he thought rabbits eat serpents nowadays.

And he's giving them an apple 'cause he couldn't find a carrot. And he's giving them rides and bouncing them up in the air.

And a fox came out of the weeds and scared them away. They jumped into the serpent's mouth and he thought it was a dragon but it was only a serpent. And those are the ears and those are legs. (Points to the picture).

And then he came back from his trip and then he saw the smiling serpent and the bunnies with him. And he thought about what he heard. And he gave them the ripest apple and they ate skin and everything else.

in school environments requires that we give at least as much attention to function as we do to the form and structure of language.

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